567 control by the canton chiefs in whose territories they are located.
622 The inhabitants pay nothing to the kombéré nor can the chief require any labor service in his fields or for the upkeep of his houses. They recognize only the Mogho Naba as chief.

567 Kamboinsé. True Kamboinsé are not Mossi; they came from the west during the reign of Naba Waraga (nineteenth successor of Oubri). Like the dapobi of the Dapoya section they came with guns (their chief even had a [ceremonial] stool) to put themselves under the authority of the Mogho Naba. Their chief, Gambaré by name, told the emperor that they had come to offer themselves as soldiers and slaves to help him pacify his territory. The Kamboinsé occupy a section of the town behind the Catholic mission on the right side of the road to Pô.

When the emperor's native gunners found themselves faced with competition from foreigners, they countered by appointing their own chief who took the title of Kamboin Naba. They are, however, different from the true Kamboinsé, and they live a dozen or so kilometers from Ouagadougou in the villages of Kamboinsé and Wobrigré.

While the first-mentioned Kamboinsé are voluntary slaves, the others are true slaves captured in war or bought by the emperor.

567 [92] Use of slaves as security for debt. Captives might be
● 426 used to settle debts. It should be noted that the right to own slaves was not limited to the emperor and his vassals. Any prosperous Moaga (dakangré) might own them.

[612] If the head of a household died leaving debts, the heirs could sell a few slaves to pay off the obligation. If, however, the creditor preferred to have the slaves, the latter were put up for appraisal just as though they were livestock.

In the same way, slaves could be traded for horses, garments, or even loads of kola nuts.

567 If slaves were maltreated by their owners, providing that the latter were not of the nobility, they could put themselves under the protection of the naba. In that event they ceased to belong to their former owners. On the other hand, if a Moaga took it upon himself
[682] to kill a slave, he at once had to pay a fine of 100,000 cowries to his canton chief as a blood price.

567 Ordinarily, captives who were brought back from the wars were
439 at once sold to the Haoussa [Hausa] or Yarcé [Yarse] who traded

428 custom which decrees that he likewise inherits all of his father's responsibilities as head of the family.

428 Do daughters and wives share in an estate? Daughters have
562 no share in an estate although their brothers may give them trifling gifts.

Wives never inherit from their husbands. They can only benefit indirectly as the representatives of their young sons. On the contrary, since the wife is considered a piece of property, [259] she is actually a part of the estate to the same extent as the rest of the property left by the deceased.

428 Disposition of an unclaimed estate. Only the canton chief is qualified to inherit the property of a deceased person having no known relatives.

Rights and Obligations Governing Property in the Family

421 Property is owned individually. Individual property is strictly a private matter. The head of the family has no rights over property acquired individually by the women and children or by other relatives under his rule. They may dispose of their possessions as they see fit. A mother may do some trading to provide savings for her children. The head of the family may not use such property under any circumstances without the consent of the true owner.

428 Does a husband inherit from his wife? A husband has no right
593 to his wife's property. He cannot even claim it if she dies childless, since in that case it goes to her own relatives (brothers or sisters) or, failing that, to their children.

428 Aside from their rights in their father's estate, children inherit their mother's property.

● [426] When the head of a family borrows cowries from [260] a member of his compound, he must repay the loan with a given time. His own property is inalienably his as long as he lives, and then it makes up his estate, along with his wives.

768 Disposition of a house after death. When the head of a com-
428 pound dies, the establishment is not destroyed. It automatically passes to the heirs, that is, to his sons or, if he has no legitimate

768 heirs, to his brothers. If the deceased was the keeper and guard-
428 ian of the family fetish, it is taken to the home of his eldest brother or to a person designated by custom.

We have seen, however, that the Moaga will not live in a home without consulting a soothsayer. Therefore, if the spirits are not favorable to the heir, the home is turned over to the other sons or to the brothers of the deceased. Besides, in many cases the eldest son is already married and the head of a family and already has his own home. He then lodges his dakompa (young unmarried brothers) or one of his uncles in his father's home.

428 Acceptance or repudiation of inheritances. Consequences.
436 To accept and receive an inheritance involves the obligation to pay the debts and claims against it. Among the Mossi, an inheri-
672 tance is never refused since a refusal does not free one from the obligation to pay the debts of the deceased. Relatives always collaborate, not because of any feeling for common property -- which [261] does not exist, as we have seen above -- but out of respect for the principle of collective responsibility which has been developed in the interests of public order. Creditors will naturally claim their due first from the legitimate heir, but if the estate cannot meet its obligations, all of the close relatives are jointly responsible.

428 The estate does not include any gifts made to members of the family by the deceased during his lifetime.

Wills. Among the Mossi, a will is always made orally.

In the presence of his relatives -- uncles and brothers -- and of his neighbors, who have been assembled for the occasion, the testator makes known his last wishes to his legitimate heir, who will have full rights as his testamentary successor. However, in the event that the will is intended to disinherit the legitimate heir and if for some reason or other he is not present, the testator will entrust the execution of his last wishes to the oldest member of the family present.

Disinheritance of the heir presumptive. In the presence of witnesses and under the conditions indicated above, the testator explains his reasons for disinheriting the heir presumptive. In the event that the reasons seem insufficient, the witnesses will seek

181 The Mossi are a mixture of defects and qualities. As a rule they
577 are not overly scrupulous about stealing and lying, but these deficiencies
674 are not so deeply rooted that they could not be corrected with the development of a more refined conscience. The Mossi are thievish because they often have the opportunity to take what belongs to others, especially cowries which are handled in a very intricate manner. It is so easy, when counting cowries, to slip a few into a pocket without the master's notice! There are some highway robbers, who are greatly feared, and many of them are very skillful. They are, of course, a very small minority.

181 Debts are the most frequent cause of theft. As a rule every Mossi
577 is both a debtor and a creditor, and when he borrows only God knows
426 when he will repay. If someone owes him a debt, he borrows, saying, "So-and-So owes me such-and-such an amount; when he pays me back, I will repay you," and he always finds someone who is willing to lend. Who can deny a friend such a favor? In order to be repaid numerous steps will prove necessary, and the day when the sum is refunded will be a happy one. This shortcoming is so ingrained among them that the wealthiest people are not exempt from it, and although able to return what they have borrowed without difficulty, they do not return it.

181 The Mossi lie easily, but they especially practice the method of
577 mental reservation. When questioned, they excel at posing another question, to find out whether their questioner is really acquainted with the facts. If they can mislead one, they do; on the other hand, if they feel that to confess would be to their advantage, they do so even if their confession implicates their accomplices; but they only do so if they are quite sure of coming through safely.

The Mossi are not false or deceitful, but they often fail to tell the truth for fear of displeasing a more powerful person. They try to guess the reply expected by their questioner, and much caution is needed when a precise piece of information is required. They also deceive by telling only half the truth; when queried, they sometimes reply to a question but suppress a detail which would have modified the answer or opened the way to another question.

They are discreet and know how to keep a secret, especially the king's secrets. When they do not wish to tell anything, they say "I don't know." This is not incriminating, and it cuts short any prying question.

596 with the help of his father and family head (which is by far the
423 most frequent occurrence), /548/ while in such a case it had for-
178 merly been considered family property. Finally, the soukala came to be regarded in every case as personal property and to be transmitted for that reason to the oldest son. This, incidentally, is the same evolution that applied to property in general, as we shall see shortly.

593 Now, here is the third and last variant of the prevailing Mossi family type. Nowadays, this variant is by far the most widespread.

1. Every household lives separately, works separately, and procures its own food and subsistence. The help of neighbors is enlisted to clear the fields.

584 2. Every household gives its own children in marriage. The family head no longer does so.

593 As soon as a man has a son, he chooses a little girl who will go to the boy when he reaches puberty. He visits the girl's relatives from time to time and offers them gifts.

584 When the girl is old enough to be married, he takes 50,000
583 cowries (if he is wealthy), skirt cloths, salt, kola nuts, and gives it
593 all to the relatives. Then, the old women in the daughter's family lead her to the home of the betrothed man's relatives. The father kills a sheep, makes a lot of couscous, buys dolo to celebrate her arrival. Then he offers the girl six or seven baskets containing respectively 1,000, 2,000, 3,000, 4,000, 5,000, 6,000, and 7,000 cowries. The young man himself gives his betrothed four or five skirts. If he is very wealthy, he gives her one or two little girls as slaves.

585 On the evening when the wedding is celebrated, the father asks
●T426 one of his neighbors to lend him a hut, and the young married pair are sent there all alone (they will remain there as long as their soukala is not built). On the morrow, the feasting begins. People dance and feast for seven days at the gates of the father's soukala, at least when the girl is a virgin. If she is not, the feasting is curtailed but nevertheless lasts for another three days.

583 When the father is poor, he offers a few kola nuts to the girl's
591 /549/ father (six or ten). He gives the father and mother some firewood he gathered in the bush, straw to make séko /Tr.: mats/ for door, 2,000 cowries, a skirt cloth. He kills a sheep to make

567 As for the bagaré, they live separately, work for themselves, see to their own subsistence, etc.

Their duties are as follows:

1. To come and work one day a week on their master's field (on that day, as on other days, they provide their own food).

2. To come and work for their master in exceptional circumstances, such as for example when the master gathers all his neighbors to work on his field.

3. To come and greet their master every year after the harvest. They give him a basketful of millet. When the harvest has been poor, they are exempted from this gift.

4. The master may request from his slave chickens, sheep, an ox or a cow. Chickens may not be denied under any circumstances. As for sheep or beeves, the slave may refuse to provide the animal requested, but then he is expected to go and sell it at market right away, and to give half the money to his master. If the slave refuses to go and sell the animal at market, the master has the right to seize his movable property and sell it.

[426] 5. When the master has debts, the bagaré must help him pay them.

428 As for inheritance, when a bagaré died his master left all the
567 property to the children. The oldest son of the bagaré inherited, but he gave something to the other sons. If there was no son, the younger brother inherited. If the sons were children the younger brother also inherited, at least temporarily. If there were no male heirs, the master inherited the property but gave some to the daughters.

567 In short, the position of the bagaré is more similar to that of /566/ serfs than to that of slaves proper. In this respect, their status is a far cry from the familial status of the slaves we have described
[171] up to now, and it is much closer to the status of the Dialonké, Soussou /Susu/, and Foulah slaves of Guinea who are also serfs, work three days a week for their master (six hours a day), and are free the rest of the time on condition of seeing to their own subsistence.

Let us add that since the arrival of the French among the Mossi,
567 the bagaré have gained a considerable amount of freedom. Nowa-
178 days, most of them will not give any of their crops to their master.

567 When a master wants one of the sheep or beeves belonging to his
178 bagaré, the latter refuses to give it, or if he consents to sell the animal at market he gives his master but one-tenth of the cowries paid by the buyer. Nowadays, as a rule, the bagaré only "go
[406] along" when their master's debts are involved, and yet some of them run away with their belongings rather than pay those debts.

567 Let us also add that these slaves, who were mostly of Gouroumsi
167 or Boussansé origin, now want to return to their own land, and there is a continuous exodus, slow but sure, of Mossi slaves toward the south. Since the French have strictly forbidden the purchase and sale of slaves, on the other hand, the sources of supply have dried out. All this makes it clear why among the Mossi, as incidentally throughout West Africa, we are progressing toward a slow but certain suppression of slavery and serfdom.

326 In closing, let us say that among the Mossi blacksmiths who
567 live in /special/ quarters or villages and whom we have already mentioned with regard to their patriarchal and nondecommunalized family type, we find true slaves of the common familial type such as we have described up to now, rather than serfs like the bagaré.

These slaves live in the same soukala as their master, whether married or unmarried, trade or house slaves. During the winter season, they all work on the fields of the soukala head from six in the morning to three in the afternoon, with the usual luncheon break. They have small individual plots, which they may work after three o'clock. During /567/ the dry season, they work all day at the blacksmith's trade with their master.

They are provided with food throughout the year by the head of the soukala, but they procure their own clothing, jewelry, grigri, etc. The soukala head buys the first wife for them and disposes of their daughters in return.

567 The estate of a deceased slave goes to his master and to his sons.
428 As far as livestock and cowries are concerned, the master takes half
326 and gives half to the son or sons. As for clothing, bracelets, etc., everything goes to the children. The latter share equally the part of their father's estate that devolves to them.

567 We can see that just as the family type of Mossi blacksmiths
326 bears witness to an older state of affairs, the status of slaves among them also bears witness to the ancient local conditions prior to

did not derive any revenue from his judicial functions. He could not levy a fine against any malefactor. However, his intermediary position between the villagers and the district chief did permit him to obtain some revenue whenever commodities moved from one level to the other.

The officials who administered the villages for the district chief received part of their revenue from the villages under their charge. These local administrators had no courts or retainers comparable to those at the provincial level. However, they did have a large number of wives who contributed valuable agricultural labor. These administrators were permitted to ask the village chiefs for sosose on their own fields several times during the planting season, but—unlike the district chiefs—they were not permitted to have the villagers cultivate special fields for them. In return for any help received, they had to provide food and drink for the workers.

The administrator received most of his revenue as a by-product of active duty in the villages. When he visited a village or transmitted a message to a village chief, he almost invariably received a sheep, a goat, a chicken, or some millet, from the village chief. He also acquired large quantities of goods during the village interregnum: he received gifts from the chief's heirs during the chief's funeral; he received additional presents when they took the fado to the district chief; he could prolong the interregnum in order to receive as many bribes as possible from contenders for the nam; and he was handsomely rewarded when the candidate he had backed was finally installed in office.

The extended family was the basic socio-economic unit supporting the Mossi political organization. The Yirisoba received land rights in his saka from his Sakakasma, who had obtained his rights from the village chief. An extended family in need of additional land would seek help from its Sakakasma or its Boodkasma. When the family no longer needed this land, it reverted to the lineage. If all the land granted to the lineage was already occupied, the extended family, through its lineage head, asked the village chief for more land. The chief usually granted this request, unless he had no more weogho available. In this case, the needy Yirisoba sometimes tried to borrow land from his non-kin neighbors. Such a step was not undertaken lightly, however. If a man borrowed land from his own lineage members or from the chief, the land rights reverted to its donors without difficulty. However, if he borrowed land from another lineage and either he or his benefactor died without assuring the return of the land, litigation often ensued. In some cases a man would seek land from his lineage brothers in another village, who let him use some of their land with their chief's permission. Some Yirisobadamba even asked their district chief for

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
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permission to use weogho in the district, and new hamlets arose in this way. A Yirisoba who could not obtain adequate land on which to grow food for his family left the district and sought land elsewhere, especially among his mother's patrilineage. However, village and district chiefs always tried to prevent this because they did not like to lose any of their subjects.

As director of economic activities in the household, the Yirisoba supervised the agricultural labor of his charges. It was he who directed the work of his wives, his sons, and his sons' wives, and supervised the care of the family herd. He provided the cotton, which was carded and spun by the women and woven by the men. It was also his task to ensure adequate clothing for the members of his household; and he sold excess commodities in order to buy salt, kola nuts, bracelets, foreign clothes, and other products imported from the forest and desert zones. In each case, the Yirisoba had to balance judiciously the requirements of his household against his obligations to the community and to the political hierarchy. He had to prevent economic rivalry among his sons, and especially among his sons' wives. He had to make sure that every married member of the household had sufficient time to provide goods and services for his own family, and that foodstuffs were distributed equitably among the wives. Finally, he had to use the resources of the household to build and maintain the nexus of socioeconomic relationships that provided wives for the male members of the household, and to meet his obligations to the political hierarchy.

The Yirisoba also had social and economic responsibilities toward the other members of his babissi and boodoo. He furnished labor and goods to needy lineage members and to non-relatives with whom he had marriage arrangements. Since much of this help was given on the basis of ultimate reciprocity, very little loss was involved. However, the relationship between commoner and noble families was quite different. In theory, the nobles had no claims on the property of the commoners; but in practice, they did claim such rights. Furthermore, commoner lineages often gave the nobles many more wives than the nobles returned. This inequality enabled the nobles to receive more goods and services from their marriage partners among the commoners than they gave in return. The nobles thus took advantage of their power as possessors of the nam, but even membership in the royal lineage did not exempt them from supporting the governmental services at all levels. This duty was incumbent upon every Moaga.

The Mossi people could not refuse to support their political organization, but often complained about having to do so. Many Mossi felt that their rulers were greedy and avaricious and received too many gifts. Some Mossi held that if the chiefs were not placated with goods and services,